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DE RUEHKO #2852/01 3472306
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P 132306Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8171
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/USDOJ WASHDC PRIORITY
RULSDMK/USDOT WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDOC/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 TOKYO 002852

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAQ](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 12/11/09

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ARTICLES:

(1) Ginowan mayor: Okinawans' opposition will make Henoko relocation plan difficult to implement

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
December 11, 2009

Mayor Yoichi Iha of Ginowan City in Okinawa, where the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station is located, gave an interview to Asahi Shimbun in Tokyo on Dec. 10. He said that even if Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama accepts the Japan-U.S. agreement to relocate the Futenma base to Henoko in Nago City, "it is not possible to construct a military base in a location opposed by the Okinawan people," indicating that relocation to Henoko will be difficult to implement.

Q: The Prime Minister remains indecisive on the Futenma issue.

Iha: The Prime Minister feels that the Okinawan people's sentiment, the three-party coalition government, and the Japan-U.S. security alliance are equally important. I think no other administration has ever taken the Okinawans' sentiment this seriously.

Q: It is unclear what solution he has in mind.

Iha: I heard that the Prime Minister told the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense to come up with one alternative proposal each to the Henoko relocation plan. Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada started advocating the Kadena integration plan, while Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa has not made any proposals.

Q: There is an opinion in the cabinet that the removal of the danger posed by Futenma should be given priority.

Iha: It is necessary to conduct this discussion while giving priority to removing the danger posed by Futenma. Apart from the relocation issue, it is necessary to stop the flight of aircraft at a low altitude over residential areas and make the U.S. forces follow rules.

The City of Ginowan has long suggested shortening the runway at Futenma as a measure to eliminate the danger posed to nearby residential areas. We will welcome the government's efforts in this regard. If a firm demand can be made to the U.S. side, this will represent a very significant step forward.

Q: It is believed that if Futenma relocation is not carried out, the relocation of U.S. Marines to Guam will also fall through.

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Iha: The Marines are being relocated to Guam not in response to a demand of the Japanese government. The U.S. side simply thinks that stationing the Marines in Guam will enable it to maintain a force capable of rapid response to contingencies. The trend is for all the Okinawa-based troops to be moved to Guam.

Q: Why do you think the U.S. side is insisting on Henoko?

Iha: The U.S. side is asking the Japanese government to deliver on the vested interests it has promised. This is probably a matter of whether they will need to give up on what they have already gained.

Q: If the Hatoyama cabinet decides to relocate Futenma to Henoko, will it be possible to build a military base there?

Iha: It will be difficult. It will not be possible to build a military base at a location truly opposed by the Okinawan people. There is such a movement in Henoko. The local communities are moving toward not accepting the base.

Q: The Prime Minister talks about the "Okinawan people's consensus." What do you think this means?

Iha: I think it means not constructing a new military base. Public opinion polls constantly show that 70 or 80 percent of the people oppose building a base in Henoko.

(2) Kadena base commander does not reject idea of moving aircraft training to Kansai Airport

OKINAWA TIMES (Page 1) (Full)
December 10, 2009

Commander Kenneth Wilsback of U.S. Kadena Air Base expressed on Dec. 9 a stance of not ruling out the idea presented by Osaka Gov. Toru Hashimoto of relocating U.S. military aircraft training to Kansai International Airport. In an interview with Kyodo News Service, the commander said: "If there is a proposal, U.S. Forces Japan will study it, and we will also study it as one option, and we might begin making plans for its realization."

The commander also said: "At this point, we have not received a proposal, so we are not at a stage to answer whether it is a good

idea or not."

He also made the following comment on the thorny Futenma relocation issue: "It is only a small part of the overall Japan-U.S. relationship. (The two countries) must continue discussing bilateral issues openly and honestly in the service of their mutual interests."

(3) PM Hatoyama's intent on Futenma relocation remains obscure

ASAHI (Page 5) (Full)
December 11, 2009

Satoshi Okamoto

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama has been unable to come up with a policy direction on the issue of the relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station (in Ginowan City, Okinawa). On Nov. 13, he told

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President Barack Obama "trust me" and appeared to be moving toward relocating the Futenma base to Henoko in Nago City in accordance with the existing Japan-U.S. agreement. However, when coalition partner Social Democratic Party (SDP) threatened to bolt the coalition, he said, "I would like to value the coalition government," effectively giving up on making a decision before year end.

A close aide of the Prime Minister is dismayed at his vacillating statements. He says: "I don't understand at all what he wants to do." "The Japan-U.S. agreement is important; the Okinawan people's sentiment is also important; and the coalition is important as well. His statements seem to be consistent, but..." This aide seems to be saying that while Hatoyama's words are clear, the meaning is not.

The manifesto of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) says that it will review the nature of the U.S. military bases in Japan. If the party simply aimed for a change of administration without thinking of concrete ways to fulfill its pledges, it is doubtful whether the DPJ will be able to steer its way through the troubled waters of a variety of policy issues, not just the Futenma issue.

Hatoyama stated last month that, "I hope you will understand that under the new administration, there are various opinions in the cabinet." However, time is running out for him to be talking so complacently. Mr. Prime Minister, please remember that you are the captain of Nihon Maru (Japan ship).

(4) Ambassador Roos's "reproach" breaks FM Okada's spirit on Futenma relocation issue

SHUKAN SHINCHO (Pages 26-27) (Full)
December 17, 2009

There is no more trace of 56-year-old Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada's previous smart appearance these days. He has dark rings under his eyes and his cheeks are sunken. Has the spirit of this "fundamentalist" also been broken by U.S. Ambassador to Japan John Roos's reproach?

A political reporter recounts the following scene where Ambassador Roos lost his temper:

"At the second meeting of the working group on Dec. 4, Foreign Minister Okada and Defense Minister Kitazawa started out by saying 'the Prime Minister is also considering relocation sites other than Henoko, so it will be difficult to make a decision before the end of this year'. Of course, the U.S. side reacted strongly, so the discussions ended without getting any closer to an agreement."

The atmosphere was reportedly very tense. After the plenary meeting, Roos asked Okada and Kitazawa to stay behind.

The above reporter says: "After the other participants were asked to leave the room, Ambassador Roos raised his voice. He was flushed with extraordinary anger when he pressed (the two ministers): "Did

Prime Minister Hatoyama not tell President Obama to trust him? Mr. Obama has lost face. This is not my personal anger. Washington is furious.' Since Prime Minister Hatoyama had lied, it was natural for him to be angry."

This fierce outburst apparently sent Okada into a panic. Okada

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himself had advocated a proposal to integrate the Futenma Air Station with Kadena Air Base.

A reporter covering the Ministry of Defense remarks that:

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) had advised Mr. Okada repeatedly that there is no way the U.S. will accept that proposal but he just wouldn't listen. The decision to return the Futenma base was made in 1996 under the Hashimoto administration. The Kadena integration plan was also studied at that time, but the U.S. persistently rejected the proposal. This is because Futenma is a Marine base while Kadena is an Air Force base, and the command systems cannot be unified. Mr. Okada did not even understand something like that."

However, even Mr. Okada, a stubborn fundamentalist, was forced with reluctance to give up the Kadena integration plan after Ambassador Roos's display of anger. At a meeting on the next day, Dec. 5, with citizens of Nago, he began to say that the current relocation plan is the best option.

Caught in a dilemma

A reporter covering MOFA relates: "Mr. Okada was supposed to persuade the local residents at the meeting by saying that Japan and the U.S. are negotiating to lighten the burden on Okinawa. However, when the participants told him that the current plan is unacceptable and asked him to find relocation sites outside of Okinawa, he just kept saying that the Japan-U.S. alliance is important. This incurred criticism even from local Democratic Party of Japan supporters. Foreign Minister Okada appears to be really worn out. This is a case where his straitlaced personality and lack of flexibility have been counterproductive."

After returning to Tokyo, Okada met with Hatoyama on Dec. 6 and explained to him that there is a very strong clamor in Okinawa for relocation out of the prefecture, asking him once again to make a decision at an early date.

The above reporter continues: "Although Mr. Okada has given up on the Kadena integration plan, he was still aiming at reaching a conclusion before year's end. However, Prime Minister Hatoyama pulled the rug from under his feet at the last minute, so he is now in a dilemma because he is the one who negotiates direct with the U.S. It turned out that Prime Minister Hatoyama chose the Social Democratic Party over Foreign Minister Okada. No wonder he is increasingly stressed out."

Apparently, even Okada, who has been given the nickname "Taliban," is at the mercy of the "alien" (Hatoyama).

ROOS